



# St. Anthony M. Zaccaria and Lukewarmness

by Fr. Giuseppe M. Cagni, CRSP

Zaccarian Spirituality Collection

vol. 3



**SAINT ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA  
AND LUKEWARMNESS**

**Collection no. 3**

# **Zaccarian Spirituality Collection**

**THE *COLLATIO*:**

**AN INSTRUMENT FOR PERSONAL AND COMMUNAL GROWTH**

**THREE-DAY RETREAT WITH ST. ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA**

**SAINT ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA AND LUKEWARMNESS**

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF ST. PAUL:**

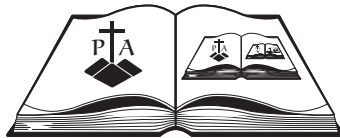
**THE “PAULISM” OF ST. ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA**

**SAINT ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA: THE PAINTING THAT SAYS IT ALL**

**SAINT ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA  
AND LUKEWARMNESS**

*Fr. Giuseppe M. Cagni, CRSP*

Collection no. 3



**Barnabite Publications**

*Zaccarian Spirituality Collection*

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Fr. Robert B. M. Kosek, CRSP, Provincial Superior  
Bethlehem, PA, USA, February 20, 2014

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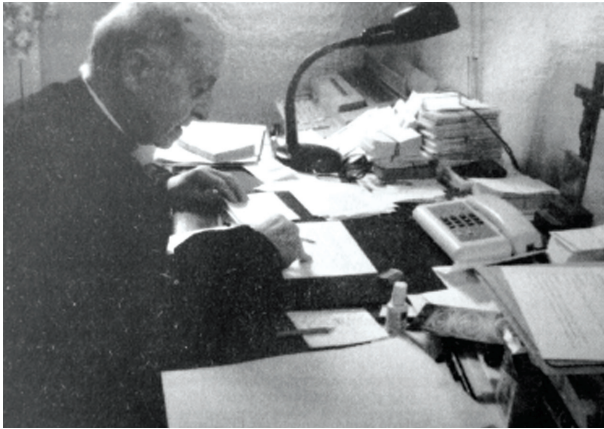
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**Rev. Fr. Giuseppe M. Cagni, CRSP**  
July 22, 1922–February 1, 2014





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## Compilers' Note

*We feel privileged to dedicate this issue to the Barnabite Congregation's known figure as archivist, historian, writer, and formator: the late Rev. Fr. Giuseppe M. Cagni, CRSP.*

*Most Rev. Father General Francisco Chagas da Silva speaks highly of him as one who "had provided incalculable historical contributions to our Congregation. Until his death, he held the position of general archivist, leaving the Congregation a void that is difficult to fill. His life was a testimony of a living presence and of encouragement and of hope."*

In this article, Fr. Giuseppe Cagni elaborates on an important subject that our saint had sought to fight and overcome: lukewarmness. Saint Anthony Mary desired "fullness of life" for all his children, and for any Christian believer. Lukewarmness is a great obstacle to achieving it. Therefore, our saint incessantly exhorts to eliminate any sure sign of lukewarmness in one's life.

The fight was once his. Anthony Mary now passes it on to us with his "implacable fury" against this "most deadly and greatest enemy of Christ Crucified." Lukewarmness definitely continues to prevail, even in our days, assuming an ever cunningly disguised form that a distracted soul cannot almost perceive.

Anthony Mary, in his writings, offers valuable indications on how to eliminate lukewarmness. Fr. Cagni quotes some of them. It will be good to keep this booklet in hand for your spiritual meditation, to find strength from it in your own fight against lukewarmness "which [in fact] reigns in our modern times."

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*Bethlehem, PA, USA – Milan, ITALY*

*January 15, 2014*

*Anniversary of the Pontifical Approval of  
the Angelic Sisters of St. Paul*



## SAINT ANTHONY MARY ZACCARIA and LUKEWARMNESS

### Introduction

The foundation of every religious order is associated with a unique “mystery of transparency.” The new manner in which a founder or foundress incarnates this mystery reflects a particular aspect of the divine essence. The duration of time in which this divine essence is communicated via the mechanism of religious life is, as with all things, dependent upon divine providence.

To date, we Barnabites have not concerned ourselves with what God is calling our Congregation to reveal to the world. However, we would like to delve into this topic, and we will begin with the article in hand. Father Cesare Barzaghi, Cardinal Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil, Fr. Giuseppe Boffito, and Fr. Giovanni Semeria have been described as “perfect Barnabites.” So, there is something that goes far beyond the science, the gentlemanly demeanor, the popular apostolate that characterizes the Barnabite spirit; indeed, the more we come to know this spirit the better we will make it present to the world.

Let the very words of our holy founder, St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, be our introduction: “My desire has always been to see a constant growth in you. Whenever it seems to me that you are not scrupulously responding to my desires, though you may have done it by ignorance or simply unintentionally, and not by malice, it is like a stab into my heart.”

This passage is well known not only because it is very practical but also because in various ways it recurs in all the writings of the holy founder. His themes are “grow” and “outdo each other moment by moment”; he clearly accepts the responsibility to pursue growth in each instant of life. To understand Anthony Mary’s desire

for fullness of life is to understand his hatred for lukewarmness; it is to understand his death at the age of thirty-six, surrounded by his flourishing institutes and successful apostolate; it is to understand the word “reformer,” as he defines it, that is, as one who leads others to authentic Christianity. Therefore, to understand Anthony Mary’s desire for fullness of life is to understand how he, responding to the urgent needs of his time, enriched the Church with enduring institutes.

We, with childlike innocence but also with the objectivity so essential to a historical study, will examine the thoughts and works of the holy founder in regards to this most basic element of his spirituality—namely, the fight against lukewarmness.

## **Part I: Theoretical Aspects—Why Lukewarmness Must Be Banished**

### **The Cry of the Time**

As in any era of widespread cultural transition, the sixteenth century witnessed intense interior struggles.

The medieval world had infused Christianity into every aspect of life, and the whole of Christendom was flowing with ease and spontaneity. However, when this reigning Catholic order was challenged by secularism, Christianity became for many a mere formality. Often unable to free themselves from the secular mindset, many Christians dragged their religion along without realizing that it did not accord with the spirit of the age.

Let us recall the diatribes of Fra Battista da Crema against the “empty Christianity” of the sixteenth century, which he condemned as scrupulous about insignificant prescriptions yet negligent toward the serious demands of the Gospel. Remember the lashing irony with which he exposed the ignorance about Holy Mass, the pride of the rich, the stupidity of the nobles, and the detestable shallowness of

those who reduced Mass attendance to a show of dresses, fancy books, and purses.

The superficiality of the laity reduced Christianity to the external observance of commands, and at the same time the clergy exhibited a frightful decadence, about which Serafino da Fermo (Anthony Mary's intimate friend) wrote, "Who are those in charge of leading the poor souls today? I would not say, because unfortunately they are well known. Better for them they were not created, for they only lead themselves and others to perdition. It is a confirmation of the words of the Gospel that say, 'They are blind people leading other blind people'; therefore, they all fall into the pit of sin."

Anthony Mary had less vehement, yet still arresting, words about these clergy: they are "hypocrites" who "open the door for others and teach them, but they do not teach themselves. What is the use of settling the quarrels of others and not your own? What is the use of urging others to overcome their passions, if you do not conquer your own?"

There were good reasons for this common saying from the sixteenth century: "If you want to be sure to go to hell, become a priest!" To illustrate how depraved the priestly discipline had become, consider how the theologians of the time intentionally taught incorrect things about sins, in the fear that ignorant confessors might otherwise lead penitents into sin!

This, in short, is the disheartening picture of religion in the sixteenth century. The holy founder did not only denounce it, he also studied its genesis.

"Do you want to know where it comes from? It is one of three causes, or all of them together." Unfortunately, Zaccaria was not able to fully expound on these three causes, as he desired. In the original manuscript, he entitled Sermon VI "The Three Causes of Negligence and Lukewarmness in the Way of God," but then he crossed out the

words “Three Causes” and wrote “One Cause,” with the subtitle “First Sermon.” This is a clear indication that his intention was to deal with the other two as a “Second Sermon” and “Third Sermon” in the remaining sheets, which regrettably remained blank.

“It is one of three causes,” Anthony Mary says, and then he continues, “For now, let us begin with the first one.” For us it is the only one, but he is so exhaustive in the first one that we do not miss so much the other two. “Some say, ‘There is no need to do so much good or so many things, only few things are required; others are optional, superfluous, and unnecessary. All this praying; all this self-abasement; all this self-chastisement, giving away one’s property to the poor; all this overdoing things in the realm of religion; well, it is simply uncalled for!’”

Here, he expresses a common mentality of the sixteenth century; the “some,” described as “poor people” and “pitiable,” are mentioned by other authors of the time. Indeed, Anthony Mary repeatedly warns against their errors: “Absolutely you have to watch yourself from saying, ‘I do not want to do so much good,’ because in that case, you would be in danger.” And, “Surely it is a great shame for some servants of God to say, ‘For me it is enough to honor God up to this point.’” In the Constitutions he says, “When you hear many, especially Superiors, say words like, ‘It is enough with this; let us not care about so much perfection,’ it is a sign of lukewarmness.”

The saint thus explains that lukewarmness is caused by a lack of generosity in those who, relying on a wrong understanding of the distinction between precepts and counsels, limit themselves to a minimal effort. “He wants the good but not the whole of it, so he limits himself because he does not want to do it in its totality, and I say, not only once or for a short time, but often and for a long time, like a habit.”



### **The Saint's Answer**

Anthony Mary responds to this situation by denying, with very precise words, the improper interpretation of the distinction between precepts and counsels, a distinction which God instituted to promote generosity, not to condone mediocrity.

### **Union with Christ**

To better understand the implacable fury of Anthony Mary's fight against lukewarmness, we will return to the One who first of all identified it and warned of its dangers.

Let us recall the words from chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew. "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." Murder was forbidden; now even insults are forbidden. Previously it was forbidden to practice vengeance that exceeded justice (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth); now charity must supplant justice, and all injuries must be forgiven. In the Old Law, one had to be responsible for any offensive word; from now on even an unnecessary or inconsiderate word reveals that one is interiorly distracted or lacking in charity. Do you love friends, hate enemies, greet those who greet you, and avoid those whom you do not like? "What is so praiseworthy about that? Do not the pagans do as much?"

The Pharisees observed even the most minute prescriptions of the law. Jesus knew that. What He reproves them for is not their strict observance of the law but rather their conviction that nothing more is required. The Pharisees have no fervor, no progress in virtue, no desire to love God more each day. Jesus' disciples cannot be like that. Jesus "came so that they might have life and have it to the full!"

This call to fullness of life is what challenges the Christian to seek the spiritual identity destined for him by God; he must always

go beyond his present state, which does not constitute his fulfillment but is only a stage on the journey toward his definitive being. It thus becomes simpler to understand that authentic life corresponds to constantly going forward, that is, progressing continuously in union with Christ Himself, against whom we measure our perfection. Through this process, the imperfection of our being is reduced until we reach the degree of sanctity that God desires for us. But we are nevertheless finite beings born into concupiscence, and we must not fail to understand the temptation to lukewarmness, which leads to the renunciation of this fullness of life, lack of interior peace, and refusal to heed God's call to perfection.

Keeping in mind the passages in the Sermons, we will now quote from the letter to the Omodeis:

“For if you let lukewarmness ensnare you, your life in the spirit will be overcome by the flesh, and, to use the proper word, you will become Pharisees rather than Christians and spiritual persons.

“Now, here is how the lukewarm—the Pharisee—behaves. Having left his old ways, he does not commit big sins any longer but takes pleasure in little ones and does not feel remorse for them. For instance, he stops blaspheming and insulting his neighbor, but he attaches no importance to getting somewhat upset and to insisting on his own opinion rather than giving in to his opponent. Speaking evil of others is no longer a bad habit of his, but indulging quite often in vain and useless chatting during the day is not much of a sin to him. He got rid of overeating and drinking excessively as drunkards do, but he enjoys snacking here and there, between meals, without necessity. The vicious habits of the flesh are a thing of the past for him, but he takes

delight in conversations and entertainments that are not so clean. He loves to spend hours in prayer, but during the rest of the day his spirit wanders aimlessly. He no longer seeks honors, but if they are given him, he gloats over them....

“I have given some examples; you can multiply them. Be sure to conclude that the Pharisee or lukewarm person works at getting rid of serious sins but allows himself to commit little ones. He eliminates all illicit things but desires everything that is considered licit.”

This reminds us of a phrase that was common in Zaccaria’s time: “There is no need to kill oneself to become a saint, since some things are only counsels while others are precepts.” We have seen that Anthony Mary does not accept this reasoning. Let us see why.

### **The Doctrine of “Always Going Forward”**

No one can dispute the importance of making progress in the spiritual life. No one can justify his lukewarmness with the excuse that there is a distinction between what is commanded and what is recommended, for the following reasons:

1. This distinction does not exist in the ontological order; rather, it is only a psychological device to sanction lukewarmness;
2. Providence has gifted man with a natural instinct that prompts each individual to constantly improve himself;
3. For the members of the Pauline family—the Barnabites, the Angelics, and the Laity of St. Paul—it is also a question of spiritual inheritance: we must not become degenerate children of our own fathers who reached such extraordinary degrees of holiness.

These three crucial elements need to be examined further.

### **1. The Distinction between Precepts and Counsels**

A precept is a compulsory injunction related to moral conduct; it is a rule to which all are subject.

A counsel is advice or an opinion intended to direct human conduct.

Let us follow our holy founder's reasoning:

#### **a. Existence of the Distinction**

This distinction is indeed found in Holy Scripture: "It is true that some of the things are precepts while some others are counsels. Christ told the one who asked Him what to do to be able to enter Paradise, 'Keep the commandments.' When the man insisted that he had kept them since his youth, Christ added, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, etc.' Christ also said, 'There are some who have freely renounced marriage for the sake of God's reign,' and He immediately added, 'Let him accept this teaching who can.'" "And Paul, speaking about virginity, said, 'I am just giving a counsel, etc.' From all these statements the distinction we are talking about is drawn." But...

#### **b. Nature of the Distinction**

Yet there is another consideration—indeed, a fundamental one—that is missed by the eyes of the lukewarm: "Do you wish, then, to know the reason why such a distinction was made? It was made to combat lukewarmness." "How? Listen. Some, as they saw the awe-inspiring perfection demanded by Christian living—the strict control of one's mind, the strict control of one's heart, the strict control of one's tongue, the austerity of life, the modesty in conversation,

etc.—felt bewildered and despaired of ever achieving any degree of goodness, let alone perfection. Observing this, some saints came up with the above-mentioned distinction so that people, encouraged by this, would be able to begin to act. Then, upon reaching a certain stability, they would slowly rise toward perfection.”

This distinction then is only psychological. It exists, but it is temporary: it helps the beginners to avoid discouragement in entering God’s kingdom, but afterwards, inevitably and by necessity, he will not turn back but will progress all the way to the “summit of perfection.”

Why “inevitably” and “by necessity”? Because the holy founder affirms that spiritual experience, by its very nature, is captivating. The more closely we unite ourselves to God, the less we feel the lure of the flesh. “Your spirit then, as it attaches itself to God, becomes simpler and spiritual and, therefore, once [it] tastes spiritual things, carnal ones lose their savor.” The difficult part is convincing ourselves to enter into this journey to perfection. As we know, once we have begun, God’s grace will carry us along. “So, start to do what is good and, as a consequence, you will make progress and you will become better.”

This is why in Sermon V the holy founder calls “blessed” those who are able to taste of this inner joy. “It is imperative in the spiritual life not to go backward and not to stop; instead, as soon as you taste it, you progress day by day and, forgetting the past, you look forward to the future. Spiritual life is like food; the more you eat it, the more you desire it. It is also like a drink that when you have tasted it, you would wish to have more. In a certain sense, it quenches and causes your thirst. Those who do not taste it, do not understand, and those who have not experienced it, do not know [its] effects.”

The spiritual life depends upon opening our hearts and minds to the realities of life, some of which satisfy us and some of which dissatisfy us. Once again, Holy Scripture will help us to understand.

### **c. Explanation of the Distinction**

Anthony Mary understood that it would be very difficult for many souls if this distinction were eliminated, and so he looks to the Divine Word for further enlightenment. Just as Scripture has authorized the distinction, so too Scripture denies it a permanent value, since its function is only to gently introduce us into the fullness of Christian life. Thus, it is like bait, which draws us into the spiritual current and eventually leads us into the great sea of Christian perfection.

“Paul spoke in these terms to [Agrippa]: he wanted him to be a Christian except for the chains he was preaching about. Oh, Paul! If your chains are so good, why do you want [Agrippa] to be a Christian without them? Almost as if Paul would answer, ‘Let him get started, and then you will see that he will not be afraid of the chains!’

“Christ requested to be received into Zacchaeus’ house, but did not ask him to distribute his inheritance; nonetheless, once Zacchaeus received Christ into his house, not only did he give back what belonged to others, he also gave his own.

“Christ forgave Magdalene, and she followed him after that. He did not tell her to do penance, to sell her own and distribute it to the poor; yet, she did penance and distributed her own to the poor.

“So, start to do what is good and, as a consequence, you will make progress and you will become better.”

Paul wrote his words with irony as he looked at his chains, but Anthony Mary goes a little further, capturing Paul’s spiritual meaning. Paul, instead of emphasizing the positive aspect of Christian life, proposed the negative: renunciation and crucifixion. Inspired by the determination of Paul over the negative aspect of the Christian life, Anthony Mary’s hearers must have said, “A little more, Paul, and you will have made a Christian out of me.”

Had Christ asked Zacchaeus to repair the evil he had done to others instead of simply inviting Himself into his house, Zacchaeus

might have refused. If Magdalene, at the moment of her conversion, had not envisioned the life of penance and renunciation by which she would strive to redeem herself, perhaps she would have remained in her sins. Instead, transformed by good words and gently invited into the journey of Christian life, Zacchaeus and Magdalene opened their hearts and rose to greater heights of virtue.

In the Constitutions Anthony Mary declared that “external prayer by itself, especially if it does not lead to mental prayer, or it does not become part of it, is only an exterior satisfaction and mimicry of true prayer or of the true spiritual food.” Furthermore, “External, or vocal, prayer has been devised in order that we, inspired by its taste and meaningfulness, may at last begin to learn interior prayer.” These teachings on prayer illustrate the general exhortation stated above, that is, “Start to do what is good and, as a consequence, you will make progress and you will become better.”

#### **d. Dangers in the Distinction**

“How miserable we are!” Anthony Mary laments. “In doing good we are using that instability and indecisiveness which we should be using to avoid evil.”

In fact, “This distinction [between precepts and counsels], as you have by now understood, was made to remove lukewarmness and negligence from the path to God. But now, instead, it is an excuse for lukewarmness and negligence for many people. Do you know why? Because these people, not deeming those supererogatory things as necessary, disregard them and care not to practice them. So, little by little they get lukewarm and say, ‘This is enough for me—that I save my soul by keeping the commandments. That’s enough, and I don’t care a bit for all this talk about great holiness!’ How wretched they are! They do not see that, by not trying to follow the counsels, they are in danger of not keeping the commandments either. Consider what

happens to those who receive communion and go to confession just once a year, and say, 'What good is it to go to confession so often? As for me, once a year is enough.' You will see that they fall into blasphemy and into other sins. But you will not find in such dangerous situations those who receive Holy Communion often, both because they do not fall into sin so often, and because, if they do, they rise up more quickly.

"Likewise, one is not content to live by his honest income, but wishes to gain more and get rich; or he is just so afraid of not having enough for his livelihood. Although he does not want to fall into the sin of possessing other people's goods, in reality he already possesses them. He does so through anxiety and covetousness. So it is in a thousand other things.

"So, you may conclude by saying, 'Whosoever wants to avoid the danger of failing to keep the commandments must follow the counsels.' And who do you think is telling you this? Is it I? Not I, but Solomon. He said, 'He who despises small things will fail little by little.' Do you want to not fall into the water? Do not get too close to it. Do you want to not disobey the commandments? Keep the counsels. Do you want to not commit mortal sins? Avoid the venial ones. Do you want to avoid even venial sins? Renounce some of the things that are licit and allowed to you. For instance, do you wish to avoid the sin of eating with some small degree of gluttony, which is probably only a venial sin? Leave out some delectable yet permitted food. Now then, you can understand that what was found useful for preventing lukewarmness has become for some people the cause of this very evil."

This edifying passage demonstrates the validity of the first and last sentences. The holy founder goes on to offer the following conclusion: "Everything has been given you in order to lead you to God, and it is imperative for you to go to God by the way of separation, and above all, separation from lukewarmness, and it is



absolutely necessary for you to refrain from saying, ‘I do not want to do excessive good.’ For, by speaking like that, you run the risk of perturbing and reducing to a bare minimum your natural instinct, which tends to do as much as it can.” So, since lukewarmness is not justified by the distinction between precepts and counsels, let us now consider how it is contrary to our nature and why the sincere Christian would readily oppose it.

## **2. The Natural Instinct**

Anthony Mary uses the term “natural instinct” to refer to all of those sentiments and desires that lead a person to total integration by helping him to progressively heal his deepest wounds while achieving interior balance and serene self-confidence. Philosophies of all kinds emphasize this interior impulse present in every human being. Let us now see how the holy founder incorporates this “natural instinct” into his vision of the ascetic life.

### **a. Natural Instinct or Supernatural Instinct**

Anthony Mary identifies in man two instincts, one natural and the other supernatural or spiritual. The supernatural or spiritual instinct is an actual grace from God, a direct inspiration—or, as Anthon Mary describes it, “an elevation of the mind by the gift of counsel”—that guides and sustains us in difficult decisions and unexpected events.

The natural instinct is an inclination or passion given to us by God, together with other “natural inclinations and passions.” It is characterized by permanent dissatisfaction, instability, intolerance of delays; it is an irrepressible need for happiness which, thank God, is ever pushing us away from stagnation and complacency. “Man by nature has a wandering mind and cannot stand still on one thing.” “It is quite true, my very dear friends, that God has made man’s spirit unstable and changeable so that man would not abide in evildoing,

and also so that, once in possession of the good, he would not stop short but would step up from one good to a higher one, and to a loftier one still. Thus, advancing from virtue to virtue, he might reach the summit of perfection. Hence it occurs that man is fickle in doing evil, namely, he cannot persevere in it because he does not find repose in it. Therefore, instead of persisting in evil-doing, he moves to do good; and moreover, since creatures did not give him peace, he returns to God.”

### **b. Qualities and Shortcomings of the Natural Instinct**

The most immediate manifestation of this instinct is a sort of greed which, making our every desire enormous, deposits at the bottom of the soul a longing for the infinite, for the absolute, for God. “Now tell me,” the holy founder questions, “do you wish to enjoy good health, entirely or only partially? To obtain all the goods possible or only some or none of them? To acquire only so much learning and no more?”

The answer is clear enough. The holy founder had already stated that natural instinct “does what it can.” He continues, “It is the same for your other desires. Everyone desires the goal as much as possible. The goal of your will is the good and, therefore, you desire it in an infinite way, without any limitations.” We have received “an insatiable desire to taste God, to experience the incorruptibility of the spirit, feeling a continuous dissatisfaction with the things of the world and a constant longing for the things of heaven.”

As we can see, the natural instinct is the driving force behind all human activity, natural or supernatural. Every man, then, lives according to the way he uses this vital interior force to grow, to reach perfection, and to put to good use the talents given to him by God. But there is a very serious danger that man will “pervert” this instinct, which, if habitually forgotten, will become gradually weaker until it fails completely—the result is spiritual death.

Therefore, lukewarmness must be banished, and we must allow the natural instinct, that providential force, to draw us, and as we grow restless in mediocrity it will lead us to the “attainment of perfection.” “O you misers! Has God not given up possessions and honors and His very own life for your sake? And as He said, what could He have done that He has not done? And here you are, trying to serve Him, to love Him, and to honor Him only in a limited way. Never again do that. For, besides spoiling the natural instinct God has given you and refusing to pay back to God what you owe Him, you harm yourselves because you do not go forward on the way to God. And, of course, to not go forward on the way to God and to stand still is indeed to go backward [*non proficere, sine dubio deficere est*]. You see, it is like the seawater that is never still, but rather constantly moves, flowing six hours and ebbing six hours. Yes, you cannot say that it is motionless. It is the same with man in his spiritual life: either he grows in virtue or by not growing in it he stagnates in vices. In other words, he says farewell to virtue and back he goes [to a lukewarm and negligent way of living].”

To conclude, our very nature cries out for war against lukewarmness. If the Christian, who is called to the fullness of Christ’s life, does not want to decay into ruin, he must ruthlessly take up arms against what Anthony Mary calls “the most deadly and greatest enemy of Christ Crucified which reigns in our modern times: I mean lukewarmness.”

### **3. The Honor of One’s Own Family**

The Barnabites and the Angelics have another reason to scorn lukewarmness; this reason concerns the nobility of their heritage. “Just remember this, our blessed fathers, St. Paul and Fra Battista, have given such a proof of noble dedication to Christ Crucified, of strict control of themselves to the point of despising themselves, of

longing to lead our neighbor to the attainment of perfection, that if we ourselves would not have such an infinite desire for these things, we would not consider ourselves his sons and daughters, but only bastards and mules.” To be worthy members of our family, we must strive to surpass even our founders: “Perhaps those who have more fervor than their masters destroy their foundations? Or, rather, without eliminating them, they add some more, not to destroy the first, but to bring them to higher perfection and stability?” Indeed, this is exactly what the founders wanted, namely, that we, rejecting all negligence and cowardice, would be “foundation and pillars in the renewal of Christian spirit.” This is why in Letter 7 Anthony Mary has no more persuasive words than a reference to our spiritual nobility and to the greatness of our vocation: “Ah! I urge you, sons and stock of Paul, open wide yourselves because those who have planted and are planting you are wider than the abyss! Do not make yourselves inferior to the vocation to which you have been called! If you wish, from now on you can be heirs and legitimate children of our Holy Father and the great saints, and Christ Crucified will extend His arms over you.”

The reference to “great” saints goes together with the exhortation to the Angelics to live a “life conformed to Christ’s according to the pattern of the great saints.” We are also reminded of the inspiring warning that the holy founder left to us as a spiritual testament in the last letter: “Know that my sorrow would be deep in my soul, if I were not sure you would do, not only this, but even “things greater than those accomplished by any saint.” This is not pride but simply what is necessary to ensure that they do not become “degenerate and illegitimate children.”

“Do not think,” Anthony Mary insists, “that my love for you or the good qualities you are endowed with, may have me desire that you be just little saints. No, I greatly desire that you become great saints, since you are well equipped to reach this goal, if you will it.

All that is required is that you really mean to develop and give back to Jesus Crucified, in a more refined form, the good qualities and graces He has given you.” Doing so, “You will bring me fullness of joy. But if you do the contrary, you will bring me great worry, and even death.”

### **Conclusion: Let Us Banish Lukewarmness**

These words of our holy founder have aptly exposed lukewarmness, and they further justify his fury against this “awful bad effect, that is, negligence, which is completely opposite to God’s way.” “Relaxation and tepidity hate fervor,” and those who are controlled by them not only hurt themselves but also “stir up cruel battles against the fervent”; indeed, they stir up “the hardest battle of all,” because this battle determines a person’s fundamental ability to lead a serious spiritual life.

This is why Anthony Mary says that the tepid are visible devils who oppose God’s work more strongly even than the invisible devils. He warned his followers to listen carefully during the spiritual conferences (*collazioni*) on lukewarmness to discover the underlying causes of its birth and growth. Even during the last moments of his life, when his “tired body” was suppressing the ardor of his spirit, Anthony Mary still found the strength to lash out with his pen against lukewarmness, even declaring that he was ready to shed his blood for the sake of his children’s spiritual growth.

“On the contrary, anyone willing to become a spiritual person begins a series of surgical operations in his soul. One day he removes this, another day he removes that, and relentlessly he proceeds until he lays aside his old self.” He prepares his “heart for God in all truth, in all simplicity, and in all sincerity. May God dwell in my heart forever through His grace and make it His temple. Amen.”

## **Part II: Practical Aspects—How To Banish Lukewarmness**

### **The Fight According to St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria**

The holy founder certainly exaggerates his faults in his second letter, but it is also true that his impassioned war against lukewarmness derived not only from his firm character but also from some real difficulties that he encountered in his spiritual life. “My very dear friends, I have to tell you the truth: it is mainly this irresoluteness in my soul, besides, perhaps, some other shortcomings, that has caused in me this great and culpable negligence and sluggishness to the point that either I never start anything at all or at least I linger on something for so long that I never accomplish it.”

Seven months before, he had written to his spiritual director: “My affairs move slowly, and my negligence delays them even more.” It seems that laziness and negligence had deep roots in our saint; he himself says that they are “rooted in my heart” and have been for years: “Often I have occasion to marvel as I see the great indecisiveness which has been in my soul for so many years. I am sure, my friend, that if I had analyzed in depth the evils that derive from this indecisiveness, a long time ago I would have uprooted this evil.” There was in him also a certain superficiality, which he called “bad sensitivity” and which was slowing him down exactly when he was feeling that the “victory over oneself” (as Fra Battista da Crema described it) would be difficult to write “with deeds and not with the pen.”

It is often the case that the saints were able to develop in themselves some desirable quality that was directly opposed to their natural inclinations. Saint Francis, the saint of poverty, was by nature a greedy person; St. Louis had a tendency toward impurity; St. Francis de Sales toward anger; St. Clare toward pride. It is not surprising,

then, that our saint, who is notable for his firmness of character, developed this virtue as a reaction to his negative tendencies. Striving to imitate his Model—"God, who is steadfast and always ready for any good"—Anthony Mary was able to acquire the extraordinary firmness attributed to him by all historians.

It would be interesting to reconstruct the stages of this interior journey. Unfortunately, Anthony Mary left us no spiritual diary. Nonetheless, by analyzing his writings we will attempt to reconstruct the strategy by which he conquered lukewarmness.

## **The Fight against Lukewarmness and Its Stages in Our Lives**

### **Presuppositions**

Since we are all called to holiness, we must fight against lukewarmness. Some have been specially gifted in this regard, and these have a better chance of victory. Anthony Mary demands that prospective Barnabites and Angelics possess this disposition.

## **Natural Presuppositions and Supernatural Presuppositions**

### **Natural Presuppositions**

First of all, there should be careful discernment with regard to accepting novices. "The Master of novices should avoid choosing men whose bounty has little value." Instead, he should choose "persons who are intelligent and are especially gifted with very strong will." These are the two qualities that every Barnabite should have: a quick intellect and a strong will. Anthony Mary says, "You can admit every sort [of person] on condition that they are well qualified in fire and in light." "If, instead, they are intelligent, but lack a very large dose of good will, do not receive them by any means. In fact, if they are good, they

make great progress; if they are bad, they bring themselves and others to ruin. You will certainly see, brothers, that the cause of grumbling, lukewarmness, and divisions in communities or congregations is none other than lack of spiritual light in those of little intelligence and lack of spiritual fire in those of great intelligence.” “Therefore, observe the nature in both categories and try to understand what is lacking, if it is light or fire. You will know this if you will follow what will be said here later, not for a day but for a long time. It is better to admit few subjects who are well disposed than to admit many who are badly disposed.” In summary, a prospective Barnabite must be characterized by a “vast natural ability.”

Once these subjects are accepted, another requirement must be considered: an attitude of readiness. “Negligence in making progress” is sufficient cause for expulsion from the Congregation. This may seem excessive, but the saint explains himself: “This expulsion is done not out of cruelty, but out of mercy, to prevent them from ruining the others with their poisonous pestilence.”

Of course, the negligence must be voluntary; the holy founder makes clear distinctions between “simple negligence,” “fragility,” and “voluntary negligence.” Even if the voluntary negligence is not related to important things, by the very fact that it is voluntary it indicates the lack of a disposition toward holiness.

No one should be afraid of reducing the size of the Congregation if such dismissals become frequent. It is not the number that counts. “Positively you should not bother with subjects who are indisposed and who are not extremely zealous for the religion and for God’s honor. Woe to us, when it would be possible to say with truth, ‘Lord, You have multiplied people, but You have not magnified the joy!’”

Thus, we have three qualities that every authentic son of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria must possess: light, fire, and right intention;



yes, “this grace-filled, exceedingly good, and perfectly directed intention.”

### **Supernatural Presuppositions**

Every spiritual work must be supported and directed by the help of God. Indeed, we labor in vain “if divine grace is not present. . . . God’s grace is so ready to help us that it should accuse us and show us that we are guilty of lacking courage due to our infidelity in embracing great things rather than we accuse it of failing us.” Thus, “It is necessary that you always trust in God’s help and come to know by experience that you are never to be without it.”

We must always remain faithful and not succumb to discouragement when a task proves very demanding. “The devil most often overpowers those who are distracted,” and “what seems to be impossible in itself becomes very easy with God’s help if only we do not refuse Him our cooperation and that diligent practical commitment with which He has endowed us.” “On our part, therefore, let us try not to fall, because Christ Crucified will take care of the rest.”

Let us fervently ask the Lord for the gift of holiness, but, at the same time, we should “come to terms with [our] petitions” by recognizing that God knows our needs better than we do.

### **Stages of the Work**

With our good natural disposition and the supernatural help of grace, we start the work, which, as any enterprise, progresses by distinctive stages.

#### **1. Negative Stage**

This is the more toilsome and, ostensibly, less fruitful stage. The ground must be cleared of all its “evil weeds” and “bad roots”; if they are merely “cut, they will come back to life.” This stage is similar

to the work of laborers who prune trees and remove weeds over and over again. In addition, though, we must uproot the weeds and cut off the diseased branches formed by original sin; this requires great effort that must be conducted both on the personal level and on the community level.

### **a. Community Life**

Our holy founder insists that the whole community should be filled with fervor; indeed, fervor should be encouraged and facilitated among the members. “Were it necessary for the Visitor to engage in the correction of defects, let him be advised that offenders should not be cured of their defects by means of jail or other punishments, but rather by striving to destroy the roots of their defects.”

“For instance, if someone complains, the Visitor should avoid giving orders such as, ‘If someone complains, do this penance,’ but rather the Visitor should first examine whether there is a just cause for the complaint. If there is none, he should simply admonish the complainer, as has been said in the chapter on punishments and penances. If he finds a just cause, he must make sure that it will never happen again. Always keep in mind that every time there is a complaint, surely something is wrong, either in the cause or in the effect.”

### **b. Personal Life**

Besides community life, each member should get to work on his interior life. To avoid faults and their causes is the least a religious can do, and anyone who purposely stops at this stage shows that he deliberately renounces holiness, because one of the sure signs of lukewarmness is caring “more about cutting vicious acts and deeds than trying to eradicate their roots.” This is wasted effort! Vices are like roots that need to be dug up and burned. “Farmers, by plucking

up the roots of the trees, will someday stop pruning and with little effort will get the fruit of the earth without thorns. So those who go to confession must insist on eradicating the roots of their vices.” But how?

First, develop good habits, and then do always the opposite of what is suggested by egotism. “For example, pride, the root of every sin, is eradicated by the profound humility of a person who thirsts for infamies and hungers for mockeries. You will eradicate the sin of gluttony by voluntary poverty, which allows only necessary things.” “Do you want contrition? Do not follow distractions. Do you want humility? Embrace childlikeness willingly, taste and have delight in derision, and rejoice in abject things. Do you want patience? Desire tribulations and pain, because patience is not given without tribulations and pain.”

We must openly share our inner difficulties so that we may be guided and enlightened. This was very common among those who came before us, but it has reached us only under the form of the chapters of faults and of the censures, which have been integrated into the Revision of Life. The “root of one’s faults is uprooted only by confessing them to those who know how to cure wounds with ointment. Therefore, each of you, brothers, should know that he who will not manifest his spiritual illness because he is ashamed, or because he suspects that the doctors are not capable, or because he vainly hopes to confess it later on, I tell you, will inevitably fall into more serious and visible faults.”

In conclusion, “The more you get rid of the causes and roots of sin, with their radical and total elimination, the less you will be oppressed by the thorns of sins, and you will have an unsullied and peaceful conscience (as much as is possible in this life) and will reap the fruits of a pure mind.”

## **2. Positive Stage**

Once the ground has been cleared, one begins the construction work. This is the positive stage in which the mind and the heart, united in a supernatural way, strengthen and guide the person and his activities.

### **a. The Mind**

Anthony Mary insists upon the education of the mind, or as he says it, “to direct the mind.” To fulfill one’s religious duties is utterly inadequate; indeed, one must “ponder well the reason for which these [duties] have been introduced, rather than think that they exist only for their own sake.” “The Master of novices should strive not only to plant the good morals but their roots as well. Afterwards he must cultivate them. It is not enough to exhort persons to be patient, humble, chaste, and so on, simply because these virtues are useful to them. He is to engrave in their souls the reasons for embedding those virtues in themselves. Let him, then, diligently give the reasons why good religious morals should be implanted, rather than merely say, ‘You must acquire this virtue.’”

### **b. The Heart**

Once the mind is oriented, every effort must be made to empower the heart, so that its impulses may move from the instinctive stage to the reflective stage. At first, our saint says, there will be in the soul a stage of fury, which stops at exterior devotion and is determined to reach heaven in one day. Once this stage is passed, we must face another stage in which the will is subjected to frequent provocations.

Finally, we arrive at the stage of fervor and true devotion, a stage in which the “will [is] ready for the things of God.” This phrase shows our holy founder’s strong disposition for God’s cause, even in the fight against lukewarmness. For him, perfect charity is not simply a

pious and ardent inner impulse but also a will that is ready to manifest its love in fruitful labors.

This stage of attentive openness to the Spirit is verified by periodic inner trials, which are intended to purify and strengthen us. We should learn “to understand whether in time of aridity [we] progress less than in time of such exterior fervor or, rather, even without such fervor, [we] become wholly and truly inflamed with interior fervor, and experience spiritual growth.” Indeed, the time of aridity is the time most suited to acquiring true love and union with God. “Look at yourself carefully if the seed of good will is still alive in you. If it is not, do not be afraid. Do not be disheartened because you lack exterior compunction, or as we say, devotion, because God is with you more truly than He is with those who are consoled. Be aware that it is the task of a truly generous person to serve without reward and to fight without provisions or pay. Therefore, believe firmly that, by so persevering, you will grow in spirit and fervor.”

### **c. Divine Assistance**

At this point, it seems that we cannot possibly live up to the Lord’s expectations. But the holy founder intervenes with the most genial aspects of his spirituality, reminding us that perfection is indeed a possibility for us and that we must not hesitate to take refuge in God’s merciful love. Every height is a goal to be achieved; every conquest a new beginning. “To not go forward on the way to God, and to stand still, is indeed to go backward” because “the summit of perfection [is] the only thing capable of transforming the heart into a decorated temple of God”—indeed, this summit constitutes the nuptial robe needed to enter the house of the Lord.

If we are to one day sit at the banquet of God’s kingdom wearing this nuptial robe, one thing is required: we must not succumb to negligence or sloth as we journey toward God: “You must resolve to

go always forward and toward perfect things...[otherwise] right away you will find lukewarmness at your door.”

This is especially true for the novices: “Teach the novices not only how to keep the fervor of their novitiate but also how to increase it by reminding them that to not go forward is to go backward.” “Teach [them] to have true love and desire for total perfection. What use would it be for them to have many virtues and then lack one? And also, what use would it be for them to have all virtues and then not care for their perfection? Anyone who finds himself in this situation should acknowledge that he does not want to honor God as much as he can.” Those who are most advanced in holiness are by no means exempted from these tireless labors: “Try always to increase what you have already started in yourself and in others, because the summit of perfection is infinite. So, avoid thinking that what you have started is enough.”

Both novices and those advanced in holiness must keep in mind that this quest for perfection is neither their gift to God nor a simple fulfillment of a duty, but indeed it is a true grace from the Lord. “Rise as much as you can, because you are more and more a debtor! Never let any of the novices, and even any of our brothers, think that he has done much, even if he has a burning desire for the above-mentioned virtues, because the more we pay, the more debtors we remain.” This idea is fairly straightforward, but nonetheless it would be helpful to contemplate it with the words of Fra Battista da Crema, that great director of souls from whom Anthony Mary learned so much: “The more man acts in a virtuous way, the greater gifts and graces he receives from God, and in receiving them he becomes even more a debtor. Therefore, by acting with great fervor, man receives new grace; without this grace he could not operate. Thus, man’s debt increases when he does what is good.”

### **Conclusion**

In January of 1531, the holy founder spoke thus to his first companions: “Come then, brothers! If up to this time, irresoluteness and, side by side with it, negligence have taken hold of our souls, let us get rid of them; and let us run like madmen not only toward God but also toward our neighbors.” Six years later, looking at his flourishing religious families, he offered the following prayer: “Infinite thanks to You, Lord, for the generous progeny You have given me.” Today, the holy founder stands before the throne of God and continues to pray for his children, that their life might be filled with “a stable and holy fervor, nourished by life-giving water and enriched by new vigor.” We conclude: “We have taken care to provide you with these few notes; if you will really observe and execute them, we hope they will lead you to perfection, especially helping you to avoid lukewarmness. To the praise and honor of Jesus Christ who died on earth and now reigns alive in heaven. Amen.”

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## **THE ZACCARIAN FAMILY**

Clerics Regular of St. Paul

Angelic Sisters of St. Paul

Laity of St. Paul

## CLERICS REGULAR OF ST. PAUL

**“Let us run like madmen not only toward God but also toward our neighbors.”**

*(St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Letter II)*

**The Clerics Regular of Saint Paul** – are commonly called Barnabites from their first major Church in Milan, Italy, which was dedicated to Saint Barnabas.

**The Barnabites** – are Clerics Regular, that is, clerics doing any priestly work but living together under a special Rule, bound by solemn vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

**Saint Paul** – is the patron saint of the Order, from whom the Barnabites draw inspiration in spreading the devotion to Christ Crucified and to the Holy Eucharist.

**The Order was founded** – almost 500 years ago by Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria (1502-1539), a learned and charitable medical doctor. Believing that souls were more in need of healing than bodies, he became a priest. Following the example – of their Holy Founder, every Barnabite adds the name Mary to his.

**The Barnabite Order** – consists of both priests and brothers. The Barnabites are in: Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Congo, India, Italy, Mexico, Philippines, Poland, Rwanda, Spain, and the United States.

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## ANGELIC SISTERS OF ST. PAUL

**“Unfurl your flags, my dear daughters, for Jesus Crucified is about to send you to proclaim everywhere the vital energy of the Spirit.”**

*(St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Letter V)*

**The Angelic Sisters of Saint Paul** – work in active apostolate as collaborators of the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul (Barnabites) and the Laity of Saint Paul in their mission of “renewing the Christian fervor” in the Church.

**Saint Paul** – is their protector and guide, after whom they model their life.

**The Congregation was founded** – in Milan, Italy, by the same founder as the Barnabites, Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria, and was granted the Pontifical Bull of approval on January 15, 1535.

**The Congregation of the Angelic Sisters of Saint Paul** – are inspired in their apostolic works by Mary, under the name, Mother of Divine Providence, who in her life has been a model of that motherly love, with which all who join in the Church’s apostolic mission for the regeneration of mankind should be animated.

**The Angelic Sisters** – serve in the Church in the following countries: Italy, Brazil, Belgium, Spain, United States, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, Philippines, Portugal, Chile, Albania, Poland, Rwanda, and Indonesia.

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## LAITY OF ST. PAUL

**“I greatly desire that you become great saints, since you are well equipped to reach this goal, if you will it.”**

*(St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, Letter XI)*

The Laity of Saint Paul originated in the early 1500s by the initiative of Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria.

The brilliant and prophetic intuition of Anthony Mary was to understand that true holiness is achieved only with a deep “internal reform” that is required of all: priests, religious and lay people, especially married ones.

So it was that Anthony Mary Zaccaria gathered around him many married lay people, to make them grow in the knowledge of faith and in the love toward neighbors. His idea was that only through cooperation of the three states of life could the Church find the ferment of growth and renewal.

By 1986, some lay people came together and decided to submit to the Barnabite Fathers and the Angelic Sisters the project to rebuild this reality. The approval of the movement was slow and resulted in some difficulties, which were then overcome.

Today the Laity of St. Paul are a reality in many parts of Italy and abroad, and have a job-training program for its members. Their spiritual life is nourished by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, especially the letters of Saint Paul, and studying the writings of the holy founder.

Their main aim is the “internal reform,” that is, to win over “lukewarmness” which leads slowly into indifference and spiritual laziness. This internal reform is also to find the strength, passion, and enthusiasm of the true Faith understood as full trust in the Person of Jesus Christ.

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## **BARNABITE PUBLICATIONS**

Barnabite Publications commenced in 2007 with its first online publication of a newsletter entitled *Anthony Alive*. In the following years, Barnabite Publications has printed religious materials, such as brochures, pamphlets, cards, and has published translated foreign works for the use of English-speaking readers. Barnabite Publications continues to fulfill its aim of evangelization through publishing and printing materials that provide spiritual means for renewing Christian fervor in the world as envisioned by St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria, founder of the Clerics Regular of St. Paul (Barnabites), Angelic Sisters of St. Paul, and the Laity of St. Paul.

Barnabite Publications depends mostly on generous donations for its publishing finances. It welcomes donations coursed through this address:

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## Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria

Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria was born in Cremona, Italy in 1502. He was graduated from the University of Padua in 1524 with a degree in medicine. As he returned to Cremona, he soon realized that people, even though in need of a medical doctor, were more in need of a doctor of souls. It was in the church of St. Vitale that Anthony reformed and re-evangelized the people. In the meantime, he studied under the Dominicans and was ordained a priest on February 20, 1529. With the aid of his own spiritual director, he moved to heal the spiritual wounds in the Milan area. Anthony joined there the Oratory of Eternal Wisdom. The purpose of this prayer group was the interior renewal of self and others. Springing forth from the oratory, the *Clerics Regular of St. Paul (Barnabites)* were formed by Anthony. He also founded the *Angelic Sisters of St. Paul* for women and another group for the laity (*The Laity of St. Paul*). Together, these three groups went around the Milanese area healing the illness of spiritual ignorance, lukewarmness, and superstition. Those in authority, civil and Church, did not like them upsetting the status quo; nevertheless Anthony and his followers continued to preach with the healing power of the reformation based on the teachings of Jesus and the Letters of Saint Paul. Anthony died, surrounded by his family and confreres, in Cremona on July 5, 1539. He was named a saint by Pope Leo XIII on May 27, 1897.





The **Zaccarian Spirituality Collection** is an anthology of works on the life and teachings of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria written or compiled by recognized members of the Clerics Regular of St. Paul (Barnabites), the Angelic Sisters of St. Paul, and the Laity of St. Paul. The collection is meant to spread, promote, and renew the spirituality of St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria in the English-speaking world.

*“Consider well what I have written to you and try to practice it by deeds, not just by words.”*  
(St. Anthony M. Zaccaria, Letter 3)



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